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Hugh Meredith



BY

Eleanor Vincent

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Eleanor Vincent



HUGH MEREDITH

*The story of a boy who conquered circumstances
by knowing the Truth about them.*

By
ELEANOR VINCENT

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Truly, not circumstances, but what we make of circumstances, harms us. The way we take things decides what they are to us or do to us. He who determines that, whatever else he may lose, he need not lose his peace of mind, stands victor over any situation.

Anonymous.

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Hugh Meredith

HEN the sun, on its daily round, peeped into a back room of Mrs. Casey's boarding house, in a great western city, it brightened immeasurably a shabbily furnished room and seemed to touch with sympathetic warmth the small figure of a boy crouching dejectedly beside a bed on which lay the still form of his dearest and best friend, whose gentle spirit had slipped away so quietly that he did not know the moment of its passing. All through the long night he had sat beside the bed, in the eerie light of a single gas jet, now and then falling asleep and waking with a guilty start, but always with a hand resting on the bed so that the slightest movement of the tired little mother would waken him. Her only complaint for days had been that she was "so weary." Between long periods, in which she seemed to be resting, she would

rouse herself and talk to him for several minutes at a time. There had been gentle admonitions, instructions regarding their small possessions, contained in a single trunk (personal belongings, relics of better days), their small savings in a purse which had been his father's and a row of choice books on a shelf.

All such references to her approaching departure wrung the boy's heart, and once he was moved to say: "But mother, if God is good, how can He take you away from me and leave me all alone with no one to care for me?" And she had replied: "There dear, you must not speak so bitterly as if God were a man to give and take away as an earthly parent might do. You know I have told you that God is the Spirit of Good in the universe, the creator of love. We speak of Him as masculine, for lack of better terms, but he is as much mother as father and certainly no loving parent would do anything cruel or harmful to their own little boy. Some day, when you are older, you will understand what I cannot now explain to you more fully, but remember this, God is always good, whether we appreciate it or not, and such misfor-

tunes as come to us are the result of wrong thinking, either on our part or that of someone else, or it may be that a circumstance that appears to be a misfortune turns out to be a blessing. Someone has wisely said that ‘nothing goes out of our lives but to make room for something better,’ and I feel that after I am gone you will have a greater opportunity for development than I could possibly have given you. Some good friend or relative will give you your chance.”

Then she had broken the silence of years regarding his father’s family, particularly his grandfather, the scion of a proud New England family, haughty and austere, who had objected to his son’s choice of a wife and had cut him off from all communication; not that the son would ask a favor. He too was proud, but possessed of gentler traits. She believed that now this proud old man would relent and be moved to take an interest in her homeless boy and, at least, provide money for his support and education even if he would not take him into his heart and home, as she fondly hoped. Carefully he had placed the pillows to support her while she addressed a letter to his grandfather, briefly stating the case and asking

his aid in her boy's behalf.

This done, she had called his attention to the small but choice collection of books, which had been his father's cherished possession through all the years of changing circumstance and which she now urged her boy to read diligently as he progressed in his school work. He recalled how she had said: "Hugh, my darling, there are two quotations I would leave with you for your future guidance. One is from the Bible and the other from Shakespeare's 'Hamlet.' The one from the Bible is: 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.' So you need never feel lonely for there is always that Invisible Presence with you to take care of you and be company for you. You can see Him in the trees and flowers, birds and animals, as well as in other children and grown-up people, for the same life is in all. The one from Hamlet is:

'This above all: to thine own self be true,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any
man.' ”

Both of these quotations were familiar to Hugh by means of frequent repetition,

and, with his mother's admonition, he knew he should never forget either of them.

After a brief pause, she had said: "Do not grieve for me, Hugh dear. You will grow to be a fine man and make every life, with which you come in contact, richer and happier for having known you and having observed the manner in which you put into practice the precepts which mother has tried to teach you."

Then he had kissed her, and, while a mist of tears blurred his sight, she had slipped away.

A tear splashed on the envelope containing his mother's letter and aroused him to action. He quickly brushed away the tear and placed the letter in his pocket, resolving not to use it until everything else failed. He was a resourceful boy. The circumstances of his life had brought out many ingenious traits, and, with a boy's natural belief in himself, he felt that he could earn his own living without appealing to his rich relatives for charity, which might, even then, be withheld. He was almost twelve years old and strong for his age. The previous summer vacation he had earned quite

a sum mowing lawns and doing all sorts of chores.

Mrs. Casey interrupted his cogitations by softly opening the door, but paused on the threshold, her sympathetic eye taking in the situation at a glance. With rare tact, she made no attempt to coddle the boy or weaken his self-respect by calling attention to his helplessness, for she had perceived the resolute look in his eyes and secretly hoped it would remain there. She merely said softly: "The dear, tired little body is at rest now. No more hard wor-r-k; no more worry about makin' ends meet. See how p'aceful she looks, laddie. Isn't it foine that she could go to schlape knowin' that her br-r-ave little lad would follow her teachin's and be a son she could be pr-r-oud av even in hiven, the saints be pr-r-aised."

With Mrs. Casey's kind assistance, a simple and (to the boy's mind) beautiful service was held for his mother in the chapel of a nearby undertaker's establishment. Mrs. Casey had even managed a beautiful bouquet of white roses for Hugh and a bouquet of carnations for herself. Others of their poor neighbors had contributed flowers to the memory of this cultured little woman

who had been a friend in need to many of them, and Hugh's heart was grateful. However, there remained but three dollars of his mother's savings, after Mrs. Casey had been paid in full.

"I shall probably be leaving in a day or two, Mrs. Casey," Hugh told her on the way back to the boarding house.

"Nothin' of the kind, m' boy," replied Mrs. Casey. "Oi've got a nice place fixed for ye up in the attic and yer jest as welcome to schtay there as if ye was me own son. Oi'm goin' to see the tradesmen tomorrow and see if Oi can't get ye a place to wor-r-k so ye can save somethin' to go to school on nixt winther."

"Oh, thank you, Mrs. Casey. You are so kind," Hugh replied. "But I don't want to trouble you that way. I—"

"Trouble, pshaw! 'Tis no trouble fer me, lad. You jest schtay right along with Mrs. Casey and iv'rything'll be all r-r-right."



The day after his mother's funeral, Hugh started out to find work. The previous night had been very hot in his little room under the roof and he had been im-

able to sleep. To divert his mind from loneliness, he had planned what he would do on the morrow. He thought it would not be difficult for a strong boy to find something to do. It was only a question of what he wanted to do most, but the experiences of the morrow proved his confident hopes unfounded, for, while he had seen most of the tradesmen in the neighborhood, none of them seemed to need a boy, or they had just hired one. Somewhat discouraged, at 5 o'clock he gave up the quest for the day and started homeward, resolved to go without his dinner to conserve the small amount of money he had left, but, on the way, he passed a tamale wagon, from which the mingled aroma of sizzling hamburger, frankfurters and coffee floated out to tempt him. He could see, on the canvas flap, the shadows of four or five patrons ranged along the counter on stools, anxiously awaiting the time to eat. Here was the first real lesson in self-control the boy had ever had. Somehow his mother had always managed to get what he really wanted badly, and he realized, with a twinge of pain, that now he must shift for himself.

He passed the wagon, fixing his atten-

tion on the traffic, which, at this hour, was more congested than in any other hour of the day. At the corner a street-car stopped and an elderly lady alighted with a suitcase. Somewhat confused, and fearing the on-coming automobiles, she stood looking this way and that, evidently trying to recognize some landmark or see an opening to reach the sidewalk. Hugh sprang to her aid, dodging between two big machines, and offered to carry the suitcase and pilot her to the sidewalk. Having done so, she asked him if he would take her to the address on a card which she offered him, and he willingly complied, happy to think he could do someone a service for his dear mother's sake. The address was not far distant and he knew the neighborhood well, so they were soon at their destination, where he rang the bell and waited to see if it was the right place, which it proved to be. As he was turning to go, the lady slipped a bright new quarter into his hand. He was loath to keep it, explaining that he had not expected pay for so small a service, but she insisted that he keep the money, and, thanking her, he hurried away to the tamale wagon, feeling that the money had been pro-

vided for him for this very purpose by the Invisible Presence, so unexpected had it been and just at the time when he needed it so badly; and hadn't his mother said: "Some way is always provided in every extremity," and wasn't it an extremity to be as hungry as he was?



The next morning found Hugh up bright and early and full of hope. Youth is ever buoyant and the troubles of a night vanish with the sunrise. He decided to try for lawns to mow. It was evident that he must be earning something right away, whether he found a regular job or not.

It was a long way from Mrs. Casey's boarding house to the residence portion of the city and he wisely decided to spend a nickel for carfare and save his strength for the work he expected to find. His ignorance of the ways of the world and the value of his services was strongly impressed upon him during the long ride across the city, but his resolution was still strong when he alighted at the corner of a park, having decided, at sight of it, that this would be a good place to start. How he loved the trees

and grass, which for weeks and months at a time he would never see. All morning he trudged about the neighborhood, but nobody seemed to need a boy. The sun was hot and he was hungry again at noon. Still confident that he would find something in the afternoon, he stepped into a drug store and bought a sandwich at the soda fountain, which he carried away to the park to eat, while he rested and enjoyed the cool shade and the beauty and companionship of the trees and flowers, and heard the birds twittering in the trees. Were they not all related to him and to that Invisible Presence which was always with him? He sat down on a bench and munched his sandwich contentedly.

On the other end of the bench sat a man reading a bit of newspaper. So engrossed was he that he hadn't even seen the boy. Presently he threw down the paper with a groan, and, for the first time, noticed the boy. "You're in luck to have a sandwich, my boy," he remarked.

Hugh glanced at the newspaper. It was the "Help Wanted" column the man had been reading. "What's the matter, mister?

Can't you get any work either?" he inquired.

"No, no work of any kind. But you said 'either.' Are you looking for work, too?"

"Yes, been looking all morning."

"What you want to do?"

"Mow lawns or do chores—anything."

"You won't find it in this neighborhood, I warn you. I have been all around."

"Do you want to mow lawns, too?" asked Hugh, surprised.

"I've been offering to do anything, for I've got to have some money right away. I am an office man, sort of a scrub book-keeper, but there isn't any place for me in that line. I have been trying for weeks but nobody wants a stranger. We came here for my wife's health and she is getting better all the time, but the money has given out."

His voice broke a little and he fell silent.

"Do you like to keep books and do office work?" the boy asked.

"No," the man replied. "But I have been doing it for a good many years."

"Mother said that when people do work

they don't want to do that they are 'square pegs in round holes,' " said Hugh, after a pause.

"You said it, boy!" exclaimed the man.
"I am a square peg all right."

"Why don't you try doing something you like to do."

The man turned to look at the boy squarely. This was an unusual boy. His observation seemed to satisfy him, for, after a moment's hesitation, he replied: "Maybe you will laugh when you hear what I would like to do, but here goes. I would like to cook."

It was Hugh's turn to stare, and, for a moment, he was too astonished to speak, but he did not laugh. Recovering himself with an effort, he asked: "Why don't you, then?"

"Gracious, boy, my family would feel disgraced. I wouldn't dare."

"I don't see why—" Hugh began, but remembering the family pride which had blighted his father's and mother's lives, quickly inquired: "Do you know how to cook, and have you had any experience? Everybody seems to want experience where

I've been," he added apologetically, thinking perhaps he had been too bold.

"Yes, I've had experience," the man replied with a faint smile. I could always cook ever since I was a youngster. My mother used to be sick most of the time and I did the cooking for dad and the boys, but I got my big experience in a most unexpected way."

Hugh edged a little closer, expecting a story.

"I got a job as timekeeper and office man in a big camp of about seventy-five men. One day the cook got sick. It was a long drive to the nearest railroad station and a long journey by train to the nearest city where a cook was likely to be found. The boss figured that by the time he made the trip, the cook we had would be well, and so he asked the fellows all around if any of them could cook for the outfit. No one could, so he came into the shack, which we called the office, and said to me: 'Well I guess I'll have to go to the city for a cook. None of the boys out there can cook and I've got to get somebody right away, but I sure do hate to take the time to go now.'

'Well try me,' says I. 'You?' says he. 'Can you cook?' 'Sure,' says I. 'Bully boy!' says he, clapping me on the shoulder so hard I almost fell down. 'You're just the boy I'm lookin' for.' So I cooked all the rest of the time we stayed there, and the boss kept the time, for the other cook had to go to the hospital, and the boss said it was the best cooking his gang had ever had and offered to keep me for more money, but when they broke camp there, I went to the city and got married, and my wife never liked the idea of me being a cook."

Hugh picked up the crumpled newspaper and studied it intently for a few minutes, then: "How's this, mister?

'Wanted—Cook for suburban restaurant. Must be able to take full charge for non-resident owner, do buying, etc.' "

There was more to the advertisement, but the man reached for the paper and read it eagerly.

"I'm going right over there now. I believe that's the job for me."

Hugh thought it was wonderful how his enthusiasm lighted his face.

"Boy, I'm glad I met you. If I get the job, it will be to your credit. I hadn't thought to look for that kind of a job. What's your name and address? I'll send you a postcard if I get it."

He took down Hugh's address in his notebook and hurried away.



Hugh felt much better for his stay in the park. Whether it was due to the influence of the park itself, his encounter with the stranger, the sandwich or the rest, he did not know, but he was ready to try again. He picked up the newspaper, out of which the man had torn the advertisement he wanted, and read the balance of the column. He had always liked to read the classified advertisements. People wanted so many things. The very last one interested him most. A handy man was wanted to look after lawn and flowers, small garden and chickens and make himself generally useful. The address was close by the park and that is what caught his attention first. He decided to apply for the place, even though it called for a man. A short walk brought him to the place, a beautiful residence with

spacious grounds, which he realized would be a fair-sized job to take care of, even for a man. On the wide veranda was a nurse maid, in neat black dress and frilly white cap, caring for a baby in a perambulator, while a small boy, of about five years of age, played around. For a moment Hugh's resolution wavered, but remembering the Invisible Presence his mother said would be with him always, he declared aloud: "I am going to get this job." Somehow the declaration put courage into him. He raised his head and walked with considerable assurance up the long white cement walk to the steps, where he paused. The nurse maid had been regarding him curiously and even the small boy stopped his play to stare at him.

"Pardon me, miss," said Hugh, "may I see the lady of the house?"

"What for?" she demanded.

"I came in answer to her advertisement for someone to look after the lawn and chickens," he replied.

"She wouldn't have you," remarked the girl curtly. "She wants a man, so you might as well 'forget it.'"

"But I can mow a lawn as good as a

man. It might take me a little longer, but I could do it, and do it nicely, too."

The nurse turned disdainfully to give attention to the baby, indicating that the interview was closed, but, in the meantime, the little boy had slipped away and now returned, holding the hand of a beautiful woman, evidently his mother and mistress of the house, who regarded Hugh as if too exasperated for speech. Finally she snapped: "What did you come here for? Didn't you read the advertisement?"

"Yes ma'am," Hugh replied, "and that is why I came."

The nurse tittered and coughed to cover her blunder.

"But I advertised for a man—not a little boy."

"I am a strong boy, ma'am, and would work for my board and a place to sleep."

"Where do you live?" the lady inquired.

"I am staying at Mrs. Casey's boarding house on the East side."

"Do your parents know you are away over here asking for work?"

"I don't know, lady, whether they do or not. Both of them are dead."

He turned away to hide the quick tears

and failed to see the annoyance in the lady's face. This kind of an interview always made her nervous and she wished very much to be rid of this persistent boy, so her tone was harsh as she said: "You are not old enough to take care of a lawn this size, besides I want other work done."

"I could do other things, too," Hugh urged.

"What could you do, I should like to know?"

"I could do errands, feed the chickens, hoe the garden and perhaps take care of the baby sometimes," he replied, looking wistfully at the little cherub whose chubby fists were rapidly beating the air, one of them clasping tightly a disfigured rubber doll.

This was too much for the lady's patience and she said angrily: "Indeed I wouldn't trust my baby with a mere boy like you," and turning, started to enter the house. But, during this conversation, the small boy had caught sight of the rubber doll in the baby's hand, and seized the opportunity to get possession of it. There was a hole in the doll's head, which once contained a whistle, and he knew, by experience, that it made an excellent water gun. The baby

began to whimper, and the nurse, seeing the cause, snatched at the doll as the boy tried to run past her. He jumped back to avoid her clutch, fell against the perambulator and sent it hurtling toward the front steps. With a cry, the nurse sprang to catch the runaway carriage but fell over the prostrate boy who was crying lustily. The lady, attracted by the commotion, turned just in time to see the front wheels of the carriage tipping over the edge of the top step, and promptly fainted, without seeing that Hugh was there to stop it. The force of the impact threw the precious infant on its nose, but no other damage was done. The small boy, realizing his danger, slipped away, and the maid went to her mistress' assistance. Hugh saw it was "up to him" to look after the baby after all, so he pushed the carriage back to safety and carefully set the baby up against its pillows, shaking a bright rattle, he found in the carriage, before it, which soon attracted its attention.

When the lady revived sufficiently to ascertain the extent of her infant's injuries, she saw it sitting safely in its carriage, gurgling cheerfully, while the strange boy was using his best efforts to entertain it

and seeming to enjoy doing so. It took her several minutes to accomplish the reaction, but finally she said, not unkindly: "I'm sorry for what I said awhile ago, my boy. You have saved my baby's life, for, if she had fallen on that cement walk, it would certainly have killed her. I know now that I could trust her with you better than I could with Janet. You should have had the carriage wheels locked, Janet," she added, turning to the maid.

This roused the maid's ire, and, forgetting the boy's service, she exclaimed angrily: "It's all the fault of that boy. If he hadn't bothered round, none of this would have happened."

The injustice of this accusation was almost too much for Hugh to bear. He looked anxiously at the lady, who appeared to give it some weight, but the small boy, having ventured back to ascertain the outcome, piped up: "Well he saved little sister from being killed and I think he's a good boy. I wish you would let him stay, mother. He could play with me sometimes, too."

This argument also had weight, for the mother turned to Hugh and said more graciously: "My boy pleads your cause. I

know he needs companionship, but I can't let him run the streets as other mothers do. If I let you stay, it will be more on his account—a sort of experiment—rather than for the amount of work you can do. I shall keep on looking for a yard man and you can do what you can until I get one. When school begins in September, you will, of course, have to go to school and some other arrangement will have to be made for you. I feel that some recompense is due you for saving the baby a fall today and Ralph wants you to stay. Do try to keep him out of mischief. There is a screened porch at the back of the house where you can sleep and put your things. By the way, what belongings have you?"

"I have a trunk over at Mrs. Casey's and that is all."

"Very well, I will send for it."

Later she had him telephone to Mrs. Casey and that evening saw him settled in his new home. He was to take his meals in the kitchen, which was no hardship, for the kitchen was white-enameled and spotlessly clean, moreover, the meals were generous and of better quality than he had been accustomed to at Mrs. Casey's and he was

grateful, besides Emily, the cook, was a motherly soul who took him under her wing at once, muttering something about it being "about the most decent thing she ever did."

After dinner, he was summoned to the library to meet the man of the house, Ralph pulling him along by the hand, anxious to display his new friend.

"Malcolm," said the lady, as they entered the library, "this is the boy I told you about. I fear you will think me foolish for promising to keep him during vacation, but I thought some recompense was due him. This is Mr. Ward, Hugh," she added, turning to the boy.

"I shouldn't put it that way, Mildred," said Mr. Ward, "but rather that we are glad to have such a boy with us and hope it will be one of the most enjoyable vacations he has ever had."

"Hugh," he said, taking his hand and patting his shoulder kindly, "I can't tell you what it means to me that you saved our baby a fall today. She is very, very dear to me, and any service rendered to either of my children will be a service rendered to me."

While he was talking, Hugh looked

steadily into his kind gray eyes, and now Mr. Ward added: "Since seeing you, I feel satisfied that you will give us no trouble, else all signs fail. If the work is too hard for you, don't try to do it, I will get a man somewhere. I want you to have time to play with Ralph a little, for he seems to have developed a great liking for you."

Hugh's heart was warmed by his cordiality, and, with a boy's quick response, secretly pledged his loyalty to this kindly man.



The next day his trunk was delivered, with a note from Mrs. Casey expressing pleasure that he had found such a good place and regret at losing him. He was invited to "come over any time," and, if he didn't like his new place to come back and stay with her. She enclosed a postcard from his friend of the park bench, stating briefly:

"Got the job—a good one. Drop in when you get hungry and have a square meal. Your friend, John Wagner."

"How kind everybody is," Hugh thought, as he put the letter and postcard

away for safe-keeping among his few cherished belongings.

But the following days were difficult ones. The lawn needed mowing right away and Hugh found it a big job. By the time he had worked half a day, it seemed the place had grown to an acre or two instead of a city lot, but he finally finished and Mrs. Ward said it was fairly well done. He worked hard, in an effort to please everybody, but soon found it an impossible task. Mrs. Ward was, as the cook said, "very temperamental." While he ate his meals, Emily regaled him with the family history. Hugh didn't know very much about temperamental people up to this time, but he soon learned what the cook meant, for each day something happened to exasperate Mrs. Ward, and he soon learned to judge to what extent she was vexed by the character of her performance.

Ralph was a dear little active boy when he wasn't "a regular nuisance," as Emily called him. He wanted Hugh to play with him all the time and was cross if he didn't, but when he had his "tantrums" no one but Hugh could pacify him. It was wonderful the influence he had over the little fellow.

Gradually Hugh was given the freedom of the house, and many delightful evenings he spent with the family in the living room. Sundays were always rest days. He had no work to do on Sunday and was often permitted to go with the family, in their big machine, for long rides in the country. It was wonderful to him to be in several different towns in one day, or to spend the day in some quiet canyon where nature was so still that the sound of their voices seemed to break its sacred stillness with unwonted clamor.

One Sunday, however, when such an excursion had been planned, Mrs. Ward had one of her nervous headaches and was confined to her room, so the ride had to be postponed. It was late in August and the air was hot and breathless. Mr. Ward had taken his paper to the vine-covered porch on the shady side of the house, where, half reclining on a *chaise longue*, he was perusing its columns with interest. Just below, in the lengthening shadow of the house, Hugh and Ralph were lying on the grass; the older boy, as usual, entertaining the younger with stories—some true and some fiction of his own invention. A small Boston

terrier was frisking about them. Dan was a new addition to the family. He had been given to Ralph on his birthday, a few weeks previous, and was the idol of the boy's heart, but, somehow, his young master's chief delight in him was to tease and torment him. While Hugh had been talking, Ralph had been teasing Dan. He would wait for the dog to come close to his outstretched hand, seize his hind leg as he passed and throw him violently to the ground, holding on until the poor little animal cried with pain or turning tried to bite him. Hugh watched this performance until he could stand it no longer, then he said:

"Ralph, you are hurting Dan. Every time you catch him that way you make him cry, and sometime you might break something that would cause him great pain and he might have to go to the animal hospital we saw last Sunday. I wouldn't do that if he were my dog."

"Aw, I didn't hurt him," Ralph retorted. "He likes it, else why would he run past here just to let me do it?"

"Well, suppose we find out if he likes it," Hugh proposed, with enthusiasm.

"Let's play that you are Dan and I will be you, and you get away back there by the porch and come running by me while I lie here on the ground. Then I'll catch your leg, as you run by, and you just make an awful fuss, like Dan does."

"All right," agreed Ralph, beaming. Nothing pleased him so much as to play a game, and make-believe was the best kind of a game for him.

Mr. Ward, who had been paying but slight attention to the boys' conversation, now leaned forward to peer through the vines with interest. Here was about to be enacted a little comedy-drama entitled "Put yourself in the other fellow's place," and he was interested at once.

All unconscious of the result of this new game, Ralph ran gaily to his position by the porch and then came on with a rush straight toward Hugh's outstretched hand. Just as he came within reach, Hugh caught his right ankle. Down he came, with the greater force for not having tried to save himself, face down upon the hard ground. One second may have elapsed, then a scream that could have been heard a block away that quiet Sunday afternoon, rent the air,

followed by such a clamor as brought his mother running from her room and the neighbors to their windows.

Hugh picked him up, though he wriggled in protest. Blood was running from his nose and mouth and a large bruise on his forehead was beginning to swell. Hugh tried to comfort him and to wipe away the blood, but Ralph fiercely protested.

Mrs. Ward, in filmy negligee, came out on the porch and began upbraiding her husband for not interfering, almost in a frenzy of anger and anxiety.

“Hush,” he whispered authoritatively. “Keep quiet now. I want to see how this comes out.”

Quivering with anger, she obeyed. She had never seen him in this mood, nor had he ever before ordered her to be silent. She was, therefore, obliged to listen also to what came next.

Seeing his efforts were undesirable, Hugh ceased trying to pacify Ralph but let him cry for some time until Ralph, noticing his apparent indifference, gradually ceased his cries. When he recovered his voice, he said tearfully: “You’re a mean boy; that’s what you are.”

"Maybe so," agreed Hugh.

"I say you're a mean boy," Ralph reiterated with emphasis.

"Yes," replied Hugh, "but what I want to know is this, did it hurt you?"

"Did it hurt me? you bad boy. You threw me down and half killed me—made me bleed and hurt my head," he wailed tearfully.

"Well, what do you say now; did it hurt Dan?"

This was too much for Ralph. The bluster ceased, as he realized in his childish way what had been Hugh's object in proposing the game and he dropped his eyes embarrassed, then suddenly arose and ran toward the back of the house.

Mrs. Ward started to follow, but her husband caught and held her hand. "Ralph will come back," he whispered. "Stay here and see it through."

And presently Ralph came back. He had washed his face. The bleeding had been but slight and only the bruise on his forehead remained. He sat down sheepishly beside Hugh and presently said: "I won't do it any more, Hugh. If it hurts Dan half as

bad as it did me, I'm sorry I ever did it. It was such fun to trip him up, but I never thought it hurt him so, honest I never."

"I know you didn't, Ralph," replied Hugh. "You're the best boy I know of most of the time, but I just had to do it so you'd see how it felt. I'm awfully sorry you bumped your head so and made your nose bleed. Did you hurt your mouth, too?" he asked anxiously.

"Nope; just bit my tongue," and Ralph put out the injured member for Hugh to see the extent of the injury.

"I'm awfully sorry," Hugh said again.

"Oh, that's all right," Ralph replied. "I don't care—much," he added.

"Well now, let's go and tell your father and Mrs. Ward, too, if she's able," Hugh suggested.

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Ralph. "They might be awfully angry and send you away and I don't want you to go away. No, you mustn't."

"That's very kind of you," said Hugh, "but I must tell them even if they do send me away."

Still arguing, they disappeared around the house.

"Now, what do you think of that, Mildred?" inquired Mr. Ward, turning to his exasperated wife.

"I think it's an outrage," she replied angrily. "That my child should have to suffer such indignity at the hands of that boy from the East side is almost inconceivable, but to have it sanctioned by you is almost more than I can bear," she finished tearfully.

Mr. Ward patted her hand and drew her to a seat beside him. "I'm sorry if I offended you, dear, but if we had interfered it would have spoiled everything. Ralph has learned more in fifteen minutes than you and I have been able to teach him in five years. He has learned to see from the other fellow's viewpoint, to be just, to be sympathetic and to acknowledge himself at fault. Do you realize, Mildred, what that means to a growing boy, particularly one petted and pampered as our boy is? This one little incident is worth more to us than it has cost us in dollars and cents to keep this boy during vacation."

Mrs. Ward listened in silence and then went to her room without making any reply.

Mr. Ward sat, with knitted brow, deep

in thought until interrupted by the two boys who had been searching the house for him.

"Mr. Ward," said Hugh, going straight to the point, "as you must have seen everything that has happened from here, I will not explain anything, because you know. I'm sorry now that I did it because Ralph got an awful bump. I didn't think it would hurt him so. I thought the grass was softer."

Mr. Ward assumed a stern air as he said: "Well it might have been worse—"

"Oh daddy," broke in Ralph, "it didn't hurt me much, and Hugh never meant to hurt me, honest daddy," throwing his arms around his father's neck and climbing on his knee. "You're not angry with Hugh, are you daddy?"

Thus appealed to, Mr. Ward laughed outright, and, gathering his little boy in his arms, held him close while he extended his free hand to Hugh, who grasped it eagerly.

"I think you are a pair of fine boys," Mr. Ward said, "and you're both going to be kind to Dan and generous with each other, and all the better for having played that

interesting game this afternoon. Come, let's go and get some of that good ice cream left from dinner."



Vacation time was almost over and Hugh was wondering what was to be his fate, but wisely waited for his benefactors to speak. The day before school opened, Mrs. Ward took the boys to a big store in the city and bought them each a complete school outfit. Hugh was very happy, for he felt sure now that he was to continue on with the Wards, and the prospect of getting an education was very pleasant to contemplate. He was careful to change his suit after school, to do what work he could, and to hang up his new suit on the hanger Mrs. Ward had provided. On Saturdays he spent the entire day working on the lawn. He had done so well with it that Mr. Ward no longer talked of getting a man. It was the first Saturday after school began that Hugh was raking the lawn at the rear of the house when Janet came out to hang out some of the baby's garments and commenced to grumble about her duties. There was always something to

be done for a baby, night and day. "I hate babies anyhow," she finished.

Hugh dropped the rake he was using, so astonished that he forgot his work. "You hate babies?" he ejaculated. "Then what are you taking care of one for? I thought people who took care of babies always loved them and that was why they did it."

"Well, I didn't mean that exactly," she qualified, repenting her hasty words. "I mean the work that goes with it."

Hugh took up the rake and commenced plying it again while he considered this new problem.

"Why don't you do something else then?" he inquired. "I suppose you are another square peg."

"'Square peg,' what d'y'u mean?" she flared.

"Oh, mother used to say that people who were doing work they didn't like to do were 'square pegs in round holes.' I told a man that in the park one day and he decided to quit being one right away and do something he wanted to do."

"But what else could I do to earn money?"

"How did you happen to be a nurse maid?"

"Why one day a friend of ma's was telling her that a rich woman wanted a nurse maid and ma asked her to get me the place, because I wouldn't go to school and she thought I ought to be doing something."

"Why wouldn't you go to school?"

"I didn't want to. I hate school."

"Seems to me you hate pretty nearly everything. Mother used to say that was an unhappy state of consciousness."

"What's that?"

"It means you are not happy in your mind, without having anything to make you unhappy. Everything is all right on the outside, but you're all wrong on the inside. The world is just as big and beautiful as ever but when you think like that you don't see the clouds and mountains over there nor hear the birds sing."

Janet stared at him wide-eyed. She had not tried to reason out the cause of her discomfiture. She only knew she was miserable. Then she remembered her grievance. "I don't care anything about that. I want to go to the dance tonight, but Mrs.

Ward has planned an evening out. You should have seen her 'rave' when I asked for the evening off. She had one of her spells and is laid up with a headache now, and I hope it will last all evening." All Janet's resentment came back with a rush and she added: "I don't care anything about your clouds and mountains, birds and things, I want to go to the dance tonight. I've got a chance to go with a nice fellow and I ought to have some fun."

Hugh gazed at her in wonder, unable to offer any argument that might appeal to such a girl. Finally he said: "I could take care of the baby if Mrs. Ward would let me. I would sit in the nursery and read until Mrs. Ward came home, and, if Helen Marie cried and I couldn't manage, Emily would be in the house and I could call her."

"She wouldn't let a kid like you take care of the baby, you silly," Janet scoffed.

Somewhat crestfallen, Hugh subsided into silence. Janet noticing this, and thinking she had offended him, tried to make amends. "There, I didn't mean that," she said, patting his shoulder. I'll bet you could take better care of her than I could if Mrs. Ward would let you, but she wont.

You don't know her. She's a regular eat."

To this Hugh made no reply. He was thinking about square pegs. Janet went on hanging up the garments.

"I guess you're a 'square peg' all right," observed Hugh finally. "What would you rather do than take care of babies?" he asked.

"I'd rather wait table in a restaurant," she replied promptly. "You get to see folks there and you don't have something to do all day long and all night, too. I know a girl who waits table and she has lots of time off between meals, and at 9 o'clock she can go to a dance and stay as long as she pleases."

"Well, I don't think much of such a life as that," said Hugh, "but if you do, I suppose you'll have to try it out. Mother said most people had to learn by experience because they wouldn't take advice, and, if you're one of those people and must wait table in a restaurant, I have a friend in the business and I'll write him a letter and ask him to give you a job. You could take the letter yourself and I think he would give it to you if he had one."

"Oh, would you?" cried Janet with shining eyes. "Then do so right away, as she's going to let me out anyway, I know, and I would appreciate it, I tell you."

She returned to the house. Hugh looked after her thoughtfully. "Restaurant, huh!" he soliloquized. "Doesn't look good to me."

With a shrug, as if to shake off something unpleasant, he fell to work with a will, but the matter would intrude itself on his more pleasant musings, and the more he thought about it, the less he liked the looks of things. He was sorry he had spoken so hastily. His only thought had been to help the girl out of her difficulty and he hadn't realized that he might be interfering with Mrs. Ward's arrangements and meddling in her household affairs. When he could stand it no longer, he abandoned his work, washed his face and hands, carefully brushed his hair and went upstairs to see Mrs. Ward. He tapped lightly on her door, so as not to awaken her if she had fallen asleep, and waited with some trepidation for her curt: "Who's there?"

"It is I, Mrs. Ward, Hugh."

"Well, what do you want?" she demanded.

"I'd like to speak with you a minute, if I may," he answered.

"Come in then," she commanded.

He opened the door cautiously. Mrs. Ward had been lying on a couch by the window, but sat up as he entered. She looked worn and pale, but her eyes shone with unusual brilliance as she fixed them on the shrinking boy. "What's the matter now?" she demanded. "Haven't I had enough to contend with for one day?"

"I'm sorry to bother you," the boy began haltingly, "but I wanted to tell you something."

"Well, please be brief," she replied, tapping the rug nervously with her slippers foot. "I have had about all I can stand for one day."

More than ever, Hugh regretted that he had come, but, since there was no other way out, he plunged desperately into the very middle of his carefully prepared speech:

"I just wanted to tell you that I told Janet I would take care of Helen Marie tonight, if you would let me, as she wants to go to a dance so badly that she will be very much disappointed if she doesn't get to, and she says you have an evening out."

"Well of all the preposterous proposals I ever heard!" cried Mrs. Ward, springing up to pace up and down the room. As her nervousness increased, she clinched and un-clinched her fingers, reaching out as if to grasp something, pressed her hands to her forehead, sometimes burying her fingers in her soft, fluffy hair as if she would pull it out. Then she would drop her hands with a gesture of despair, only to repeat the whole performance again and again. Hugh watched her fascinated and forgot the purpose of his errand, his relative position, everything but Mrs. Ward's strange behavior.

"Are you a 'tragedy queen,' Mrs. Ward?" he asked with interest.

"What?" she almost screamed.

"I asked if you were a 'tragedy queen,'" he repeated innocently. "I never saw but one lady who could do that way and she was in a play. I asked mother what made her do that and mother said she was a famous 'tragedy queen' and was playing a part."

Mrs. Ward had turned away, without answering, and Hugh went on:

"There was a lady lived at Mrs. Casey's once who could almost do it, but mother

said she just 'lacked self-control.' I couldn't see very much difference between the way she did and the way the lady did on the stage, only the stage lady was beautiful like you, Mrs. Ward. I asked mother what self-control meant, and she said: 'just what it says, being able to control oneself,' but yours must be the 'tragedy queen' kind, for this lady I told you about got so old and sick looking and finally went to a hospital, and I don't know what became of her after that."

"You may go now," Mrs. Ward said with a chilling accent. "I will send for you later," she added, as he obediently moved toward the door, cold with fear that he had inadvertently offended his benefactress, for whom he was beginning to have a stronger feeling than gratitude or admiration, but he would have been comforted if he had known that something within her had stirred to awakening life and she wanted to be alone to analyze it.

After he had closed the door softly, Mrs. Ward seated herself comfortably and gradually relaxed the tension of her nerves. Her trained mind quickly grasped the import of Hugh's simile as applied to her case and

she determined to master the fine art of self-control at once. She forgot the seeming impudence of the homeless waif from the East side and did not realize that she was giving weight to the wisdom of a mere child when she began to search herself as an impartial critic; but it marked the beginning of a new regime for her.

About an hour later, she sent Ralph to call Hugh, and the boy (who had had a bad hour in awful suspense over the consequence of his boldness which he had not realized at the time) went again hesitatingly toward the room he dreaded to enter. However, he reasoned, philosophically, that everything has to have an end sometime and he might as well know his fate. This renewed his courage and he tapped lightly on the door. Mrs. Ward opened the door and put her arm around him as he entered. Her face, always beautiful to him, seemed to radiate light, so wonderful was its expression. He could only gaze at her in wondering admiration. Seeing which, she laughed happily and drew him to a seat beside her on the couch, for a little talk.

"Hugh, my dear," she began, "you have taught me the most valuable lesson of my

life, in which I have learned two things—how to analyze myself and how to control myself.”

“Why, Mrs. Ward, I didn’t teach you anything,” exclaimed the astonished boy. “I was afraid I had offended you.”

“Never again, dear boy,” laughed Mrs. Ward. “I am going to be a different woman from now on, and, if I do not prove so, I want you to tell me about it and I will promise not to be offended. I find I have been very foolish all these years to allow myself to be mastered by the trivial events of a day instead of mastering them, and by not realizing that I am superior to any circumstance that I will have to cope with, and you have shown me all this by a chance remark, or was it chance? No, I think there was a purpose in it which was fulfilled. To show you how much I appreciate this service and how much I trust you, I am going to let you stay with Helen Marie to-night in the nursery, as you suggested. I have let Janet go, as she isn’t satisfied here, and she told me about the talk you had with her that you came to tell me about. You may write the letter you spoke to her about, so that she can get a more desirable position,

if possible. I have secured the services of a nice middle-aged lady, who loves babies, to take care of Helen Marie. I was talking to a friend over the 'phone, a few minutes ago, and I happened to speak of needing the services of a good nurse, and my friend recommended this lady. However, she cannot be here until tomorrow. How easily the problems solve themselves when one has learned the secret!"

"That's it, Mrs. Ward. That's what I've been wanting to say," cried Hugh enthusiastically.

"Well then," replied Mrs. Ward, "we will call this our secret for the present. I want to try out my new self-control. You can go and write your letter for Janet and after awhile you can go to sleep on the couch in the nursery, and, if the baby cries and you can't pacify her, call Emily. We will be back by 12 o'clock I think, and I am sure you will get along all right."

Hugh's heart was light, as he ran down the softly carpeted steps to the library to write the note to Mr. Wagner. It ran:
"Dear Mr. Wagner:

I am sending you another square peg.
She wants to wait table so she can go to

dances at 9 o'clock. She took care of our baby but she doesn't like babies very well but likes to see people in a restaurant. I thought you might have a job for her and I would be glad if you would give her one. We got another nurse for our baby.

How are you getting along in the restaurant now? Hope fine.

Your friend,

HUGH."

When Mr. Wagner read this note (which fortunately had been sealed) the next day, he smiled. The "square peg" was a plump little brunette who might have been considered quite pretty by some, and the reference to "our baby" also amused him. It happened that one of his waitresses was ill and this girl, though a green hand, might prove to be apt if she really liked the business; besides, he liked Hugh and would be glad to do him a favor, so he employed Janet.

Having given Janet the note, Hugh had dismissed the matter from his mind, and, through the long hours until midnight he sat watching the flower-like face of Helen Marie in her dainty bed under the softly shaded lights of the nursery. Not

once did he close his eyes until Mrs. Ward came to relieve him, lest he be unworthy of the trust. Somehow those hours in the stillness of night, alone with the baby, made a lasting impression on the boy and increased his love for the child immeasurably; and she responded, as the days went by, by manifesting a decided preference for his society. As the evenings grew chill and the family gathered around the grate fire in the living room, he would devote himself to amusing her and Ralph until their bed-time, then he would get his lessons for the next day.



Hugh had now been with the Wards about five months. The days had glided swiftly and pleasantly by, each filled with some new and interesting situation or adventure. His stay with the family seemed to be assured and nothing was said, in his presence at least, regarding his future. Gradually he also ceased to think about it.

The autumn days were beautiful. There had been some frost and the leaves were turning red and gold. A filmy haze hung over the city, and, through it, the slanting

rays of the sun filtered pleasantly warm and conducive to idle dreams. After school, Hugh loved to lie on his back looking toward the sun, with half-closed eyes and seeing what appeared to be fiery sparks bursting from a small red-gold disc at a great distance and rushing toward him in iridescent splendor. While looking down this cone-shaped vista, he would weave the most wonderful dream stories. He acquired this habit through the necessity of producing at least one new story every day for Ralph, who had an insatiable desire for stories and listened with flattering interest as long as Hugh would tell them. Hugh had long since exhausted his original supply and had read aloud a number of story books which Ralph had received on various gift days. He liked "Alice in Wonderland" and a simplified edition of "Arabian Nights" best of these, but the stories that Hugh "made up" were the most interesting of all to Ralph. It was wonderful the number and variety of these stories that came to him during these brief periods, for Ralph, seeing him thus absorbed and anticipating a new story, would scarcely give him time to reach a climax. Once, when a

particularly interesting story had been interrupted in this way, Hugh was moved to say, with pardonable impatience: "Ralph, why don't you make up some stories of your own? Mother said people who had imagination were never lonesome. If they were children, they could play by themselves, and if they were grown people, they could just sit still and have a good time."

"But I can't," complained Ralph.

"I don't believe you ever tried, Ralph, and I think that would be a nice new game for you. Try it sometime when I'm not here."

Ralph looked dubious, but agreed to try.

A new diversion was offered by Hallowe'en night. After school the boys carved their pumpkins. Ralph insisted on doing his own, but soon cut his finger and relinquished the task to the older boy. To make up for this disappointment, Hugh let him scoop out the seeds, and his pleasure in the occasion was restored.

When it grew dark, they lighted their candles and sallied forth to give the neighbor children a thrill, but it turned out that Ralph was the most frightened of all when a couple of boys, in white shrouds, carrying

huge pumpkins with terrible faces showing teeth, started to chase him. Ralph took one look over his shoulder and ran as fast as he could toward home, closely followed by Hugh trying to hearten him. Gaining the front steps, however, and eluding his pursuers, Ralph's courage returned and he insisted on sitting down to hear the ghost stories Hugh had reluctantly promised earlier in the day, but Hugh thought he had had enough thrills for one evening and wisely decided to turn the whole experience to good account, so he inquired:

“What made you run from Harold and Joe and get so frightened? You knew they were going to wear sheets and have those big pumpkins? Why you saw them growing in the back yard yourself. Now what made you get so scared?”

“Yes, I knew about it,” admitted Ralph, “but they chased me and I saw those awful faces and everything, and I got scared,” he finished lamely.

“Well, don't tell me you haven't got any imagination any more,” said Hugh. “I'll say you're chuck full of it, and it's a really truly fact that most everything people are afraid of is nothing but a picture of some-

thing that might be scarey if it was real, but the real things, like the Invisible Presence, aren't scarey at all, so when you go to getting scared, you just say: 'That's only a picture. It isn't a real scare,' and you'll get right over it. If you don't, just think about the Invisible Presence that's always with you and it'll make you feel safe."

Hugh always adopted the ungrammatical language of the smaller boy when he wanted to impress him deeply, and it always had the desired effect.

"All right," agreed Ralph. "I'll try the next time."

Not long afterward, he was tucked in bed sleeping peacefully, with no ill effect, apparently, from his adventure. But Hugh lay awake for some time, gazing up at the stars and thinking. The nights were getting chill and Mr. Ward had ordered material to enclose Hugh's porch with glass, and pipe for a gas heater. He thought of this material now on the ground and to be used on the morrow to make him more comfortable, and it made a pleasant glow of warmth steal over his body and soon he was asleep, but was awakened, a few minutes

later, by a curious feeling of something approaching. A queer sensation crept up his back and raised the hair on his head in a most uncomfortable manner. He remembered his advice to Ralph earlier in the evening and immediately started to put it into practice, with an added prayer to his mother for protection. It was wonderful how it lent him courage. He sat up and peered into the dark. At that, someone stumbled on a section of pipe and fell on the pile of lumber.

"Who's there?" challenged Hugh in a clear, ringing voice.

"Cut out the noise, kid. I aint goin' to hurt you if you keep still," came in a hoarse whisper.

With a strong temptation to flee in panic, his physical body trembling with fear, Hugh was conscious of a superior power seeking control.

"It's the Invisible Presence," he said to himself.

By this time the man had groped his way to the steps, and another man was standing just inside the hall door leading to Hugh's porch. Mr. Ward had heard the intruder pass beneath his window, and, guided by

Hugh's voice, had arrived at the door just as the man reached the steps.

"Unhook this door, kid, or I'll have to cut the screen; and be quick about it."

"What do you want?" asked Hugh.

"I want you to tell me where the valuables are quick," the man urged.

"I'll tell you where you can get anything you need, if you'll tell me what you want it for," returned Hugh.

The man behind the door started violently, but still waited.

The man outside muttered impatiently: "You're wastin' time and will wake everybody up talking so much. Just keep still now. I'm comin' in."

He started to cut the screen. "Stop it, or I shall scream," said Hugh, "even if you shoot me for it. These folks are the best friends I have in the world and I'm not going to have anything happen to them that I can prevent."

"Oh, you're not? (Pause.) Good to you, eh?"

"Yes, when mother went away and I was all alone over on the East side at Mrs. Casey's, I came over here looking for work

and these people took me in and are as kind to me as if I belonged."

The man was silent a long time and Hugh wondered what it meant. Finally he muttered: "Guess I'll go somewhere else; but say, you said you'd tell me where I could get anything I want. I'd like to know."

Here was safe ground for Hugh, and, pulling the blankets around him, he started to tell the man all about the Invisible Presence, in his enthusiasm forgetting his fear and leaning closer to the man so as to speak in lower tones and not arouse the family.

"Mother said," he proceeded, "that the Invisible Presence is the Spirit of Good in the world. It is everything that seems good to people—like health and love and happiness and wealth and lots of other things, and people can have everything they need if they love everything good and never do anybody else a wrong. If they do anybody else a wrong, then they can't have everything good, but get back something like they did to somebody else that was wrong." After a pause he added thoughtfully: "It looks like most everybody has done somebody else a wrong 'cause most everybody seems to want something they haven't got

and not to want what they have. Well, anyway, if they turn right around and try to do good to everybody, the bad things will stop coming and good things begin to come."

The man heard him, without interruption, until he finished, then said:

"That sounds good, boy, but tomorrow merning I've got to produce one hundred dollars or lose my home that I've been slavin' for years to hold. I've got nine hundred dollars paid on it and had this hundred just about saved up when both my children got sick with diphtheria and I had to pay it all out to save them, and the doctor ain't all paid yet."

"But it wouldn't do you any good to steal. They'd just put you in jail," put in Hugh.

"They wouldn't a' caught me if I hadn't run into you; but, hang it, you interest me. I haven't never seen such a kid."

"There was a lady lived at Mrs. Casey's once, and mother used to bring her sewing from the factory and take it back and collect the money for her 'cause she had two little babies and couldn't leave them, and she told mother all about the pretty home they had in the suburbs and were paying

for like that, and the man worked in a bank, and one time they got behind in their payments and he took a little money from the bank. Nobody noticed it, so he took a little more, and finally they paid for their place and got an automobile and everything. Then one day they arrested him and put him in the penitentiary and they lost everything, and that lady often wished they had given up the place right at first rather than take one cent that didn't belong to them, and then her husband would have been honorable, and that's the way your folks would feel if you took anything from Mr. Ward.

"Ward! Ward! you say; not Malcolm Ward?"

"Why yes, why?"

"Why that's the old thief himself; one of them anyway. They're a bunch of crooks, I tell you. Get people to slave away and put every nickel of their savings in these houses and then take the whole works away from them, no matter how many payments they've made on time if the last one ain't. I'd better have been enjoying myself on that \$900 and givin' my family some of the comforts and pleasures of life than just to hand it to that bunch of crooks to enjoy

themselves on and buy their folks presents."

"But Mr. Ward isn't like that," persisted Hugh. "He wouldn't take anything that didn't belong to him or rob anybody of comforts or pleasures. Why, just look what he did for me!"

"Yes, that's the way a lot of 'em do. They rob a lot of people and do a charitable act once in a great while. Gee, they ought to."

"But mother said folks shouldn't think about how much money other people have or how they get it or spend it, because there's always something else those people would like to have and don't have,—something they can't buy with their money, like love, or health, or friends. Then, too, people who haven't lots of money can just ask the Invisible Presence for what they need and pretty soon they get it. I'll tell you what; you ask the Invisible Presence to help you and then go down to Mr. Ward's office and ask for him and tell him about it, and I think he will help you out this time; and after that, the Invisible Presence will help you *every* time if you ask for it. But I say, Mister, what made your children sick?"

"Oh, I guess Providence wanted to punish me for something or other 'cause He knew them children was dearer to me than anything else in the world 'ceptin' their mother. That's the way He sometimes brings people around, they said over to the meetin' house; but it didn't bring me around any. My heart's been like a stone ever since. I asked one of them fellers over there how he accounted for the fact that the children didn't die after all, and he said it was 'cause God decided to show mercy, or somethin' like that. That cooked me. I ain't been there since."

Hugh considered this for several minutes, then said thoughtfully: "I think that's all wrong, Mister. Mother said 'God is always good, whether we appreciate it or not, and any misfortunes that come to folks are the result of wrong thinking either by themselves or somebody else, and I don't believe God would make little children suffer to punish somebody else anyhow. Now who was it did the wrong thinking that made the children sick?'"

"Why, nobody as I know of."

"Yes, there had to be somebody, because mother said so."

"You sure do think a lot of your mother, don't you? Now let's see, who did the wrong thinking? I can't make it out. It was like this: the children slipped out the back way, while we had company, and got the hose and carried it out to the garden spot to make mud pies. I went out to get a drink at the sink in the kitchen and saw them with it. I called my wife and she took one look and said they wouldn't do any harm. I said they would, 'cause it was a cold day, and that started an argument. She went back in the parlor and there wasn't anything fer me to do but follow; so the kids played, and after awhile they came in all wet and cold, and I says to my wife: 'Now, you see, they've caught their death of cold,' and sure enough that night they commenced to have diphtheria. Now was *that* the result of wrong thinkin', I'd like to know?"

"Yes," replied Hugh. "I think it was. The children thought wrong when they took the hose knowing you wouldn't want them to. The lady thought wrong when she said they wouldn't do any harm, for she must have known better, it being such a cold day; and you thought wrong when you went back

in the parlor believing all the things you had said were true. There's always something tells folks when they're doing wrong, but lots of times they don't listen. If they would listen, and not get afraid, everything would come out all right, and nobody would be sick."

"You don't say? Well, I swan!" ejaculated the man. "Just 'thinkin' and listenin', eh? You say your ma's dead; what made *her* die?"

For a moment Hugh hesitated, then the application of the truth he had just been asserting came to him in a flash of illuminating insight as he answered: "It was on account of wrong thinking, too. She told me all about how to think right, but she didn't think right about herself. She could just as well have lived, but she thought all she could do was to work at the factory and that somebody else could give me a better chance. She got discouraged and tired and just quit trying to live."

"But it turned out the way she said, didn't it?" asked the man, seeing a chance to score.

"It turned out the way she *thought* about it," replied Hugh, "but the Invisible

Presence could have helped two just as well as one if we had both thought so."

"Well, I swan! If you don't beat all!" muttered the man. "Say, I think I better be a-goin'. D'y' know, it's a funny thing none o' this talkin' has roused any of your folks and that the police ain't here to take me in? Maybe they're on the way now. So long, boy. Glad I met you this particular night."

Somewhat chilled, even though wrapped in his blankets during this long conversation, Hugh cuddled down in bed with a happy feeling that soon sent the warm glow over his body which was always his reward for a worthy thought or deed.



The next morning Mr. Ward astonished his household by declaring that he was going to withdraw from the Consolidated Investment Company that day. Hugh's frightened look caused Mr. Ward to smile behind his napkin.

"But you'll be there this morning, wont you, Mr. Ward?" he asked anxiously, then turned very red.

"Yes, I shall be there this morning and for several mornings after. It will take time to get everything straightened out."

"But what do you intend to do, Malcolm?" inquired Mrs. Ward, as anxiously as Hugh, but with a different motive.

Seeing the look of deep concern in her eyes, Mr. Ward hastened to reassure her. "It's all right, Mildred. I have had a splendid offer from a most unexpected source, which I have been considering for weeks, but didn't seem to have any good reason for making a change until now. I have decided to accept it today. Will tell you all about it this evening. I haven't time now," he added, consulting his watch and hurrying out. Soon they heard him drive away, and at least two of his household were very much interested in what he would do that day.

That evening, at dinner, Mr. Ward told the story of a man who came to the office and insisted upon seeing him, personally, about a payment due on his property. "He had a 'hard luck' story, like all the rest, but, whether it was true or not, I couldn't see him lose his property for one hundred dollars, so I loaned it to him for three

months. He makes good wages and was positive he would have the money in that time. I took a chance."

"Why Malcolm!" exclaimed Mrs. Ward. "I never knew you to 'talk shop' before. That is the most I ever heard you say about any business transaction. How came you to speak of it?"

Her glance, following the direction of his, fell upon Hugh's beaming face and caught the almost worshipful look in his eyes. "What could it mean?"

Mr. Ward was speaking: "I always liked to experiment, Mildred," he said, and, with this rather ambiguous statement, she was forced to be content, for he changed the subject by telling an interesting anecdote, beginning: "That reminds me—"



On Thanksgiving Day the Wards entertained. It was the annual reunion and dinner for all the relatives who were able to attend. Hugh had asked permission to eat in the kitchen and to remain in his own room, so cozy with its windows curtained with white Swiss and its small gas heater. Mrs. Ward had produced two sections of

bookcases and had added some books to his collection. There were also a cushioned rocking chair, a small chiffonier, a small table with a drawer and a straight chair, which was very convenient for the preparation of his lessons.

Occasionally a sound of the merry-making reached him. He heard the phonograph and decided, from the records used, that the young people were dancing. He retired about 10 o'clock and soon fell asleep. Some time later he heard Emily moving about the kitchen, and, 'though he knew it was late, supposed she was clearing away the effects of the feast and turned over to sleep again; but just then the door-bell tinkled in the kitchen and Emily hurried out. A few minutes elapsed and she returned to the kitchen and others were with her. He recognized Mrs. Ward's voice. Then he heard a man's voice giving quick directions which he could not understand; then a door closed. Evidently all but Emily went out. She continued to bustle about the kitchen. What could it mean? He listened intently. Presently Emily came out into the laundry porch for something and Hugh opened a window and called softly to her:

"Emily, what's the matter?"

"It's Ralph, honey. He's very sick. The doctor's here and he says they ain't any hope."

"Why, what's the matter with Ralph, Emily? He was well enough just before dinner when he was in my room."

"That's jest it. Before dinner he was all right, but they let him eat too much. He's got acute indigestion, that's what. There, I've got to hurry."

She went into the kitchen and Hugh sprang out of bed and began dressing with all possible haste. His little friend, whom he had grown to love as a brother, was suffering and perhaps dying at this very minute. While he dressed, he tried to reason it out. How could a boy as strong and healthy as Ralph be ill if perchance he had eaten too much dinner? What strange destiny hung in the balance with a measure of food? One person might die for lack of it and another because of it.

By this time he was dressed, without having reached a solution of his problem, and groping his way along the back hall and up the back stairway. The door of Ralph's room opened, as he reached the

landing, and, in the light from the room, he saw the doctor just leaving. Mr. Ward stepped out into the hall immediately afterward and closed the door.

"Well, doctor?" Mr. Ward's voice betrayed the tension he was under.

The doctor placed a hand on his shoulder as he said: "God knows I wish I could hold out some hope, Malcolm. I say, this is tough."

They passed into the front hall and closed the door. Hugh hastened along to the door of Ralph's room, but paused. It was shut. Should he knock or just walk in? He decided on the latter course.

Mrs. Ward, with shadowy eyes, looked up, expecting to see her husband and learn the final verdict, and saw Hugh standing there with a look of anxiety on his young face which matched her own. She motioned him to enter and he tip-toed to the bedside where Ralph lay in a comatose state, the result of a hypodermic injection, which the doctor had given him, upon his arrival. Now and then he writhed in pain, of which he was, apparently, not conscious. Mr. Ward came back, but his face expressed no hope. The doctor had returned to his office

for something he needed in the case. Mrs. Ward, unable to control her emotion, left the room, and Mr. Ward sat down by the bedside and buried his face in his hands. Hugh watched him intently, trying to understand his grief, the possibility of his fears being realized and the depth of his love for his child; not that he actually analyzed and classified these emotions, but, with childish intuition, he comprehended the struggle that was taking place in his benefactor's soul and an intense longing to comfort him and give him hope moved him to turn, with his usual faith and trust, to the Invisible Presence in sincere though wordless prayer.

Stepping softly, he moved along the bedside and knelt beside Mr. Ward, placing a hand on his knee. Mr. Ward looked up, and there was a look of tenderness in his eyes as he put his arm around the boy and drew him close.

"It's about all over, Hugh," he whispered brokenly.

"No, Mr. Ward," Hugh replied. "The Invisible Presence is here."

"I suppose you mean God."

"Well—yes. Most people say 'God,' but they usually think about God as being a man, like a father; but Mother said the Invisible Presence is not a person but is everything good, like life and health and love. Don't you believe the Invisible Presence can give life and health to Ralph if we can give him love?"

Hugh's enthusiasm and faith were infectious. Mr. Ward felt strangely moved and marveled at the feeling of confidence and hope that now displaced the former hopeless, helpless one, as he looked into the boy's radiant face and listened to his simple declaration of faith.

"And Mother said," the boy went on, "that if two people asked for the same thing, and believed they could have it, they would have it. Couldn't you and I ask for Ralph to be well and have him get well right away?"

"I believe we could, son," Mr. Ward replied.

"Well then, let's do it now."

Hugh dropped his head on the crook of his arm, resting on the bed, and Mr. Ward closed his eyes. What took place in the souls of these two manifestations of Divine

Life was never disclosed, but there must have been a triumph of faith which knows no denial, for, after a time, both, with one accord, leaned forward to look into the face of the child on the bed, who immediately opened his eyes and began to ask questions in his usual boyish fashion: "Was it late? Had he slept too long? What were they doing there? Was it time for breakfast?"

He sat up and reached out to put an arm around the neck of each of the two watchers, now as happy as they had been anxious before.

Mr. Ward gently placed him back in his bed and said: "No, it's not time to get up yet, dear. Just go to sleep again and we will call you in the morning in time for breakfast."

"But daddy, what are you and Hugh doing here if it's night?"

Mr. Ward looked at Hugh, saw the radiant look still on his face and replied: "We just *thought* you were ill, that's all."

"Oh, but I'm not, daddy. I feel fine, and I'm not a bit sleepy. Can't I get up?"

Mr. Ward again looked at Hugh for a suggestion, and Hugh said: "You don't want to get up now, Ralph. It's too early.

You just stay in bed and I'll tell you about the frog that could have been king of the pond if he hadn't gone to sleep."

So he told the story in a slow and monotonous manner, making it up as he went along and using the word "sleep" as often as possible, thus unconsciously using the law of suggestion:

"Once there was a kingdom of frogs in a pond in a big, big field, and all the king and his family had to do was to sleep and enjoy themselves, but one day the father frog went to sleep and never woke up and so the frogs in the kingdom decided to make one of his sons king; so they got together and chose one of them, but when they went to find him he was gone. Now it happened that he was the sleepiest one in the family. He loved to crawl out on a log that had fallen into one end of the pond and sleep, and that's where he was, asleep, on the day he was chosen king of the pond. The day was nice and warm and the bees and other insects buzzing around him made him *so sleepy*. He tried to listen to them but the more he listened the sleepier he got and finally went to sleep, but a fly landed on his head and tickled him, so he woke up and

snapped at it, but it got away and he went to sleep again because he was *so sleepy*, and the bees a-buzzing made him so sleepy—”

The tale ended abruptly, for the little boy’s regular breathing showed his appreciation of the little frog’s preference for sleep to being king of the frog pond.

Mr. Ward went to tell the good news to his wife, and Hugh crept back to bed to continue his interrupted slumber.



The Christmas season was approaching and Mr. and Mrs. Ward were planning their Christmas festivities. There was to be a large tree, lighted with electric candles and strung with ropes of candy beads, pop corn and tinsel. New decorations were to be added to those of former years and all small presents were to be hung on the tree in the old-fashioned way.

“Let’s make it a real Christmas tree,” Mrs. Ward said. “This has been a wonderful year for our family, Malcolm. There has been a great change in it since last Christmas, which is difficult to define. I know that I am different, and I can see certain changes in every member of the

family. Whatever the cause, there is reason for joy and happiness this Christmas and I want to celebrate it as never before."

"All right, Mildred, it shall be as you wish," replied Mr. Ward. "You spoke of changes,—in yourself and every member of the family. I have noticed these myself, and this seems to be a good opportunity to tell you about the change I see in you. While I have always considered you lovely, and about as near perfect as mortals can be, you are actually becoming perfect. I mean that while you were always willing to make amends, you were pardonably quick-tempered six months ago. Now you seem never to be angry or even annoyed, though I have watched you meet the same conditions that would formerly have tried your patience beyond endurance, and have marveled at the calm, unruffled manner in which you met these situations."

"That is a very kind way of putting it, Malcolm, but I know now that I was a 'tragedy queen,'" and she laughed merrily.

"A 'tragedy queen,' what do you mean?"

Then Mrs. Ward told him the story of her interview with Hugh, concluding: "and so you see what caused me to change and

to whom I am indebted for your praise to-night."

"This is very interesting, Mildred, but I have even a stranger tale to relate. When a man gives up a profitable business just because a mere child condemns it, there is either something wrong with the business or there is a most unusual and remarkable child to make him believe there is."

Then Mr. Ward told his wife his experience on Hallowe'en night, which had resulted in a most favorable change in his business relations.

Mrs. Ward was amazed when she heard the reason for this change. "You surprise me greatly, Malcolm," she said. "I have wondered so often about that very thing and hoped you would tell me some day, as you have. And to think it was Hugh! I know now why you told about the man visiting your office before Hugh, and why his face lighted up so; but, that you could lend money to a man who had come to rob you is more remarkable still. It is literally carrying out the admonition to give your cloak also, or to go a second mile. You certainly would not have done so a year ago, before Hugh came. Since he has been with

us, think of the changes he has made in other people's lives. There was that man he met in the park just before he came here. I understand he is doing well. Hugh often visits him at his place of business and he says he is making money and his wife is well, and doesn't object to the restaurant business now; and there is Janet still working for him, as happy as can be, doing what she wanted to do, whether it be good for her or not, and making more money than we could have paid her for her services. And Helen Marie was saved a fall and possible death on the very day he came here, by his timely action, and now fairly idolizes him, as anyone can see. Then Ralph was saved from an untimely death by the boy's knowledge of Truth and his ability to declare it, and even Emily is more docile in the kitchen. I have actually had several intimate talks with her and was surprised to discover that she has a quaint philosophy of her own that she is trying to live by, for which she deserves great credit, of course, but I recognized many of Hugh's sayings in her statement of it. Evidently he supplied the words she needed to describe 'that something' which struggles for

expression in all of us. Last of all you and I, Malcolm, have been guided to the place of understanding by this boy's timely warnings.

"That is a long list of achievements for one boy in six months, Mildred, but I have still another to add to the list. The man I just told you about, who came to rob me on Hallowe'en night and to whom I loaned a hundred dollars the next day, came into my office today and paid me the money before it was due and insisted upon paying the full three months' interest. Said he got some money he never expected to get—all due to the Invisible Presence. Then he got very red and talked fast to cover what he considered a blunder, but I was very much gratified to hear it, as it was proof that he was following the boy's advice and that it was actually bringing results."

"Isn't that wonderful?" exclaimed Mrs. Ward. "I don't believe there ever was such a boy. Some people say that children haven't much influence over the thought of their elders because they are not yet sufficiently developed mentally and spiritually, but this particular boy not only has influence over his elders, by reason of his

simple and practical philosophy, which he is able to apply to their particular difficulties, but he modestly disclaims any credit for himself, giving it all to his mother."

"People are partly right, Mildred. Most children are like clear pools of water, in which their elders may see themselves reflected, and, if the image be distorted, the reflection is the same. The responsibility, therefore, is great. Hugh's mother must have realized this fact, for the image he reflects is almost a perfect likeness of one who has studied to show herself approved, 'a workman that needeth not to be ashamed.' But if Hugh receives a reflection, he also gives one. He is like a reflector back of a searchlight, sending his knowledge of Truth straight into the lives of everyone with whom he comes in contact, yet without egotism or hope of reward. I wish all children could discover their own latent power for good and use it for the benefit of others. It would make this old world over in one generation."

"That is a strong statement, Malcolm, and yet I believe it is quite possible if—but that leads into a deep subject, which I do not care to discuss tonight. Just now I

am interested in Christmas and want to ask what you had planned to give Hugh for Christmas.”

“I had thought of getting him a bicycle, Mildred, because I wanted to get Ralph one, and I thought it would be well to have him ride with Ralph to protect him. What are you going to give him, Mildred?”

“I was going to get him a pair of ball-bearing roller skates, for exactly the same reason; but Malcolm, couldn’t we do something for the boy that wouldn’t be prompted by a selfish motive?”

Mr. Ward looked into her eyes intently, for a moment, and, unable to credit what he read in their depths, inquired: “Mildred, you don’t mean—?”

“Yes, Malcolm, why not. He is worthy of anything we can do for him.”

Then followed a lengthy discussion, and a pleasant surprise for somebody was the result.



On Christmas eve the tree was lighted, and the family, including Hugh, Emily and the new nurse, Mrs. Wood, with Helen Marie in her arms, gathered around to ad-

mire its splendor and enjoy the holiday spirit which its presence engendered.

The small presents were placed on the tree, to be found and opened on Christmas eve to carry out the plan, and the larger ones would appear early Christmas morning.

There were exclamations of surprise and pleasure as the various packages were opened and displayed. Hugh helped Ralph to find his packages and assisted him in untying them. In an upper branch of the tree he found a long envelope, which he supposed was something for Ralph. He carefully untied it; glanced causally at the writing on it and was surprised to read his own name in Mr. Ward's bold hand. He looked curiously at it. Glancing up, he surprised both Mr. and Mrs. Ward watching him, pleasant anticipation on their faces. What could it be? He turned it over. It was sealed with wax. He broke the seal and drew out a legal document. Not until he had read half of it did he begin to comprehend its meaning, then tears filled his eyes so that he could not read. He went over to where Mr. and Mrs. Ward were standing and inquired of Mr. Ward:

“What does it mean, sir? Are you and Mrs. Ward really going to adopt me as your boy so that I can really belong to the family always?”

“That’s what it says, son,” replied Mr. Ward, and Mrs. Ward nodded in the affirmative, unable to speak for emotion, while happy tears shone in her eyes.

Hugh put his arms around Mrs. Ward and she drew him close and kissed his forehead.

“I know my mother is glad now, Mrs. Ward,” he said. “This is just what she planned for me, and I believe she brought it about.”

“It is quite possible, dear,” replied Mrs. Ward softly.

Ralph soon discovered that something unusual had taken place and insisted upon knowing all about it, and Emily also listened, evidently much pleased, while Mr. Ward explained it all to him.

“And is he my brother now?” queried the little boy, almost beside himself with excitement, jumping up and down and indulging in a rough and tumble game of his own, until Mrs. Ward was compelled to call for quiet. “I know you are happy, little

boy, to have Hugh for a brother, but he has been that and more all the months he has been with us and he will continue to be—just himself."

When the others had moved away, Mrs. Ward spoke to her husband of the manner of Hugh's acceptance of the gift. "He has the true characteristics of a gentleman—that innate refinement which may be the gift of a long line of well-bred ancestors, and poise, which is the result of knowing oneself, which, in turn, comes from spending much time alone in thought. I truly wish that we might claim natural kinship, but we have done the next best thing and henceforth he will be Hugh Meredith Ward."

"Why Mildred, I hadn't thought of it before, but that came very nearly being my name; I mean Meredith Ward. Mother wanted to name me Meredith after her people, who were so very proud of the name, but father insisted upon naming me after himself, because there has been a Malcolm in the family for a good many generations."

"That's so, Malcolm. Do you suppose—?"

Mr. Ward divined her meaning, and, turning to Hugh, asked: "Do you know anything about your father's family, Hugh?"

"Not much, sir. Mother told me a little just before she went away and wrote a letter to my grandfather asking him to help me, but after what she had told me, I decided not to send the letter."

"Do you still have it?" asked Mrs. Ward.

"Yes, I think so."

"Would you mind letting us see it, dear?"

"Not in the least," replied Hugh, hurrying to his room to get it.

"Do you suppose it is possible that he is the son of cousin George, Mildred? You remember Uncle George cut him off because he wouldn't follow the program laid out for him. It was a shame, as he was a fine fellow, so promising and the only heir to the name of Meredith. I'll wager Uncle George has regretted that all his life, but he was a hard, unyielding man and, so far as I know, never forgave him. I am wondering what he will do with all his money when his time comes to hand it over to others?"

At that Hugh returned with the letter and handed it to Mr. Ward. The name on the envelope was "George P. Meredith."

Ralph had called Hugh back to the Christmas tree and Mr. and Mrs. Ward discussed the letter in low tones.

"It is the most remarkable coincidence I ever heard of, Mildred," said Mr. Ward. There is one thing certain, if I can prove that Hugh is old George P.'s grandson, that he will get his share of the old man's estate when he 'shuffles off this mortal coil.' The boy is a credit to the name of Meredith, too."

"Yes, dear," replied Mrs. Ward, "it will be your duty to see that Hugh inherits his just share of the estate, but, in the meantime, it is our privilege to have him in our home. Did you hear the dear child giving his mother credit for everything? I remember his words: 'This is just what she planned for me, and I believe she brought it about.' Do you know, Malcolm, I believe that is quite possible, for, if the soul lives on, possessed of such a love as Mrs. Meredith had for her boy, it could not help striving for the welfare of the one so loved in that realm of the soul."

"Ah, Mildred, I do not follow you, with my limited understanding, but I know that there is something in every individual that lives, has always lived and can never die, and, if it is possible, as you say, to keep in touch with those we have loved and who have passed on to another life, *there is no death*, only an ever-changing life."

"You have such beautiful thoughts, Malcolm," said Mrs. Ward, leaning affectionately on his shoulder.

"Let us ask the boy's opinion," suggested Mr. Ward.

Hugh was called from the tree again and the matter explained to him. "What is your idea now of life here and hereafter, son?" Mr. Ward concluded.

"It is like an adventure to me, Mr. Ward, or like going on a hike. Of course we can't have sunshine every day, but we are sure to have some kind of weather. The things we do are sometimes affected by the weather, but, if it rains and we can't do the things we planned, there's always something else we can do that will be interesting, and the rainy days make us appreciate the sunny days that much more. That is like life, I think. If things seem to go wrong

a while, pretty soon something nice comes along and we appreciate it much more than if we had it all the time."

"That is logical, my boy," said Mr. Ward, "and accounts for here and now. How about the end of this hike and thereafter?"

"Well, sir, the end of the hike is the biggest adventure of all to me. Besides being in an entirely different place, I shall see mother again and perhaps we shall talk about this Christmas and the big surprise in this envelope," he replied, holding it at arm's length and regarding it with an expression of mingled gratitude and pride.

At that someone stepped up on the veranda and rang the bell. Emily hurried out to answer it. No one was in sight, and, as Emily peered into the darkness so long, trying to discover who had pushed the bell, the family came to the door also, and Ralph soon discovered the cause.

"Oh look at the packages!" he shouted.

Just beside the door were several bulky packages, which Mr. Ward carried inside. When brought to the light, the various tags read: "From your friend of the park bench." "From your friend, Janet."

"Wishing you a merry Christmas, A Friend." Although Hugh's name did not appear on any of them, it was obvious for whom they were intended.

As Hugh made no move to open them, Mr. Ward inquired: "Aren't you going to open your presents, Hugh?"

"I had rather not, sir," Hugh replied. "Somehow I don't want to see anything more tonight. I just want to think about what I have received, and about something mother said that I do not understand."

"What was that, dear?" Mrs. Ward inquired.

"Mother said," replied Hugh, "that if I practiced the precepts she had taught me that I would make every life with which I came in contact richer and happier for having known me. I have tried to do so, but it seems to work backwards. Everybody is trying to make me richer and happier, so I'm afraid I don't understand."

"Indeed you do," said Mrs. Ward. "You *have* made every life with which you have come in contact richer and happier for having known you, and this is proved by another bit of your own philosophy, for I have heard you say that 'whatever we send

out comes back to us.' If that is true, then you must have sent out blessings into many other lives which are now coming back to bless yours; which reminds me of the quotation: 'Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days!'

"That's in the Bible, isn't it? I just read a verse yesterday in Mother's Bible that she had marked, which made me think of you and Mr. Ward."

"What was that, Hugh?"

"It said: 'Inasmuch as you have done it unto the least of these . . . you have done it unto Me,' and tonight I thought how much God must love you and Mr. Ward for doing so much for Him."

Mrs. Ward held out her arms in one of her beautiful gestures and enfolded him in a loving embrace, whispering softly: "My boy."

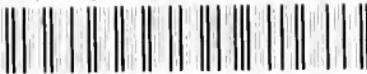






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